



South Fulton News You Can Use

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Here's What a Typical Day Looks Like for Code Enforcement

By Darius Goodman

Pesky signs, overgrown grass and unsightly blighted properties are all over the place, if you're looking for them.

However, there's always one department in the city whose job it is to maintain order, protect property values and keep the streets safe. It's a unique job that often goes unnoticed, until officers show up in neighborhoods and on street corners to clear up the eyesores.

Code enforcement officers are unsung heroes who play pivotal roles in ensuring the city is beautiful and thriving.

In the shoes of four-year veteran code officer Paul Muhammad, there is much more going on during the day at the code offices.

"A typical day for an officer is, first arrive at the office, do any necessary paperwork, check e-mails and check for any complaints that may have come in, plan out the day based on the findings," Muhammad said. "Afterwards, hit the field. Go to assigned zones looking for new violations and handle any compliant violations that came in."

When it comes down to getting to a call location, Muhammad says that it's always adventurous and social. There's never a dull day for the officers as they regularly chat with the public and educate people on the significance of code enforcement.

One of the newest projects for code enforcement is the Sign Trouble is Now Gone (STING) program. It tackles sign violations on a case-by-case basis when ongoing violations put human safety and the environment in jeopardy.

On-the-Job problems can occur any day code officers are in the field, but that doesn't deter Muhammad. To him, customer service comes first and foremost when people approach officers negatively.

Even in situations where code officers aren't needed, they find themselves in precarious positions. When citizens target another citizen, they often try to use code officers to settle personal issues.

"Another struggle is having to be the bearer of bad news, while still maintaining good customer service," Muhammad said. "This truly builds character and communications skills."

Often, Muhammad hopes people understand code officers help keep the community clean and safe, thereby preventing property values from being lowered. They also help keep crime down.

“We want them to know this because if they understood, it would change any negative perception they have of us and would make them want to do their parts to help,” Muhammad says.

The joys of code outweigh everything, especially when residents show kindness when blighted properties get cleaned up.

“Grateful residents always send us e-mails of praise for helping with situations that affected their community,” Muhammad said. “Several illegal dumping cases that were problems and now has ceased and desisted.”

Muhammad has seen his share of extreme cases, from homes being broken into and rooms being rented illegally to commercial vehicles being parked against regulations in residential areas, causing damage to streets. He even worked a case where the management of a property placed residents in units with no air-conditioning. Even worse, the apartments were infested with rats and roaches and full of mold.

Although residents often criticize, Muhammad says many seem grateful South Fulton’s code enforcement when officers step in to fix bad situations.

“It makes me approach the day knowing customer service is my main tool that will help me overcome the dislike of code enforcement,” Muhammad said. “When people meet someone whom they deemed to be bad, but have a good experience, it tends to change perception and they will tell others of the good experience they had with me.”